

KEYS TO SUCCESS

The following is part of and must be read in conjunction with the [Overview of the Oral Exam](#).

What are the keys to success in the court interpreting profession?

Court interpreting is a sophisticated and demanding profession that requires much more than having some knowledge of two languages. First, one must be *extraordinarily bilingual*, possessing a highly educated, native-like ability in **both** English and a second language. In addition, one must have the *professional skills* to interpret in the profession's three modes of interpretation: sight, consecutive, and simultaneous. The profession requires *uncommon personal qualities*: mental, physical, and emotional stamina.

In addition, one must have extensive knowledge of *legal terminology* in English and the second language, as well as *court procedures and protocol*. Since most people who take the tests do not possess the skills, knowledge, or the noted personal qualities, the vast majority (89%) of persons who take a court interpreter oral examination in New Jersey fail it. **Do not allow yourself to believe that, because you are "bilingual" you are likely to pass this professional exam without a lot of professional preparation.**

In order to enhance candidates' chances at successfully entering the court interpreting profession, prospective interpreters are encouraged to use the following keys to success:

1. **Read everything in the oral exam overview document carefully and follow its suggestions.**
2. **Read the broadest array of subjects possible in both languages in many forms** (i.e., fiction and non-fiction books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites) to expand your general vocabulary. Take literature courses in both languages.
3. **Obtain professional training** in the three modes of court interpreting -- especially simultaneous -- from a college or university. On-line courses are also available. A list of known courses and other resources is available at [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#).
4. Obtain practice materials from any of numerous sources and **practice, practice, practice** all three modes of interpreting, **especially simultaneous**. A list of known courses and other resources is available on the [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#) web page.
5. **Observe a wide array of different types of court proceedings**, both those that are interpreted (to observe how professional interpreters conduct themselves) and that are not interpreted (to learn legal terminology, courtroom protocol, etc.). See the [Directory of Contacts](#) on the website ("General Information" section) for contact persons through whom observations of court proceedings can be arranged.
6. **Obtain and study thoroughly at least one classic textbook on court interpreting.** A list of books and other resources is available on the [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#) web page.
7. **Obtain at least one bilingual (English and your second language) legal dictionary or glossary (see website for list) and learn the most frequent legal terms in both English and your second language, as well as their respective equivalents.** If no dictionary or glossary is available, use the master list of legal terms available on the [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#) web page or from the [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) and develop your own glossary.
8. **Join at least one professional association of court interpreters, read its publications, and attend its conferences.**